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ABSTRACT

Several inadequacies exist in the training of those teachers who teach in reservation schools. These teachers often know nothing of the special characteristics of reservation life, of the language and culture of their pupils, or of the best ways to teach children of non-Anglo backgrounds. This absence of knowledge then causes adjustment frustrations for both the teacher and the students. Some suggestions for recruiting and producing better teachers of non-Anglos include (1) retrainig existing staff; (2) cooperating with colleges of education to help prospective teachers learn enough of an American Indian culture and language to deal effectively with children of that culture and language; and (3) taking as candidates people who are native to the area, familiar with the language and culture, and accustomed to the isolation and distances involved in living and teaching on a reservation. Additionally, the origin, administration, and organization of the Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps Program are discussed. A competency based teacher education program is noted as one of the outstanding features of the Teacher Corps Program. It is concluded that with the proper professional preparation of Indian people, they should eventually be controlling their own educational destiny and have full self-determination. (HBC)

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# TEACHER CORPS

## A MODEL FOR TRAINING TEACHERS

Position Paper
Native American Teacher Corps Conference
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Roger Wilson
Teacher Corps
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, Arizona

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TEACHERS FOR INDIAN CHILDREN

by Roger Wilson

There are many areas throughout the United States where schools and the communities which feed them lie far from the nearest college or school of education. These areas are particularly common in the western states, Arizona, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Wyoming and the Dakotas being excellent examples. Most isolated and usually most distant from the institutions of higher education are the larger Indian reservations so that the schools dealing most with Indian children seldom are used for teacher-intern training or in-service courses for present teachers. Ironically, although the elementary and high schools in these areas are operated mainly for Indian children, the teachers who staff the schools often know nothing of the special characteristics of reservation life, of the language and culture of their pupils, or the best ways to teach children of non-Anglo backgrounds. For the most part, teachers in these schools have been trained in the traditional manner, having taken the usual courses including psychology, child development, and methods of teaching. In terms of practical application, they have spent from six to eight weeks in a student teaching laboratory where the children come from predominantly non-Indian, urban or suburban homes.

Indian children because of their isolated situation and cultural and linguistic background need the best qualified teachers the schools of education can produce. Reservation schools often do get qualified teachers from good colleges, but if the teacher has been recruited from a populous eastern area and has never been in the West before, he is in for a series of shocks when he enters upon his career in Navajo or Hopi country. First comes the physical shock of the light and space and emptiness of the landscape, then the strangeness of the houses, fields, and crafts of the people. He, of

course, is little prepared to understand either the language or the ways of his pupils or the Indian aspects of the "foreign" community he will find himself in.

However, upon reaching his destination in Kayenta, Dennihotso, or Keams Canyon, he feels a little more at ease. The school buildings are modern, his own housing is more than adequate, and his neighbors on the compound all speak English. Overnight he has hurdled the language - culture barrier. He thinks he is in a world he can cope with.

For a while the isolation, the distance from the nearest railhead or mucicipal airport, the sand between his teeth are novel - something to write home about. Then soon, driving 250 miles round trip for groceries and other necessities becomes a "drag", and in bad weather, over unsurfaced roads, "town" becomes a tantalizing dream.

In spite of the creeping frustration he feels at home, he feels he should make glorious progress with the untouched minds of his pupils in the classroom. Here, however, he finds himself slowed down, even blocked, unable to make himself clear or to get the response he'd got in practice teaching.

The children in the classroom also encounter frustrations not too different from the teacher's. To them the teacher and his language are foreign, the surroundings with their stiff furniture and unaccustomed patterns are foreign, the rules and regulations concerning behavior, and the threat of discipline are foreign. Many feel homesick and miss their pets and families, and long for their customary freedom of movement out of doors.

If our teacher is in the primary grades, he finds that the children speak little if any English. The intermediate teacher finds his pupils have made some progress in vocabulary and comprehension, but both he and the class find communication limited if not difficult. The upper grade teacher soon finds that he must not require too many compound sentences in compositions

or, in giving instruction himself, use the compound-complex sentence. How can this be, when everyone knows that English is the Universal Language?

At the end of the school year, the teacher who has lasted that long finds his worst suspicions confirmed by the results of the standardized achievement tests. With the exception of spelling, arithmetic computation, and, to some extent, the social studies, the results are quite sad. The drilling in arithmetic and spelling paid off. As for the social studies, in an area which is primarily under the thumb of the federal government, it's not hard to remember that Washington was your father.

Three important factors now enter the picture to plague the teacher. Depending on his attitude toward this first year's experience, they may not necessarily be in the following order. First, he is conscious of the fact that cultural and language differences do exist. But, he wonders, how much they are to blame for the net results of the hard year he has just put in. He has no way of knowing, and that depresses him. Second, the logistics of the situation have depressed his family as well as him -- distances so great and isolation -- whew! Third, he has experienced a frustrating year because he wanted to do a good job and he has lacked success almost all around in the classroom.

Will he stay and take advantage of the things he has learned this year, or will he leave and be replaced by another novice who will have to struggle through a similar experience to a similar end? It's now May 31 and he has until the middle of August to make a decision. During this time, while making up his mind, he can get in two weeks of vacation, take advantage of educational leave, or remain on the compound (and on the pay roll) helping to paint the lavatories or count paper clips.

This picture of muddle and frustration in reservation schools involves both the new teacher and the pupils. Most of us concerned with Indian

education realize the sad truth of the picture just sketched. We see the teacher's lack of information about the children themselves, their language, their culture, and the community they spring from as prime inhibitors of their educational development in the schools. We also see the teacher's reaction to frustration in the classroom, isolation and distance as a prime factor in the attrition of teaching personnel.

What to do?

We obviously cannot offer a different physical environment for the new teacher, so the answer seems to be to get a different type of teacher, the ideal reservation teacher. How can we recruit or produce such teachers? One way would be to retrain existing staff; another would be to get the cooperation of Colleges of Education to help prospective teachers to learn enough of an Indian culture and language to deal effectively with children of that culture and language. Also, the teacher candidate would have to know, or be initiated into, the realities of reservation life before being asked to teach in Indian country.

Another way to get the ideal reservation teacher would be to take as candidates people who are native to the area, familiar with the language and culture, and accustomed to the isolation and distances involved in living and teaching on a reservation. In Northern Arizona this means recruitment of Navajo and Hopi Indian students, something very little encouraged in the not too distant past.

Until quite recently there was almost no encouragement for Indians to enter the teaching profession. So-called achievement and placement tests indicated to most schools that Indian students would do best in the clerical and vocational fields. Therefore, these are the areas where most Indian students who entered trade schools, colleges, or universities are to

be found. This placement policy has produced a small pool of technically trained young people who find little opportunity to put their skills into practice when they return to their home areas. Those graduates wishing to remain in the mainstream of the dominant society encounter keen competition and, with the exception of civil service positions, find it difficult to survive in jobs outside the reservation. These young Indian men and women with their vocational or fairly good liberal studies backgrounds find themselves presently working as teacher aides or in clerical positions. Many need only the opportunity and some encouragement to enter the profession of teaching.

Another source of teachers which we must recognize is the group of earnest non-Indians who desire to teach on the reservation and have the dedication to stay where they are needed. However, desire and dedication are difficult to measure, and ability to acclimate to reservation conditions can be measured only after the fact. Now here is where the Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps based on the Northern Arizona University campus comes in. It is, so far, the best instrument for developing, shaping, and tempering the prospective ideal teacher for our Indian children.

The Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps Program was the first major effort to get "the ideal teacher" for the reservation schools. There were teacher-interns from Teacher Corps in several Indian schools serving the Sioux tribes in Nebraska and South Dakota in 1966, and the interns involved received academic training at the University of Nebraska in Omaha, but the program merely added useful, partially trained personnel to the schools. It did not constitute a full scale Teacher Corps Program.

The Teacher Corps began as a result of Congressional legislation in 1965 with the first programs getting under way in 1966. The Northern Arizona University program got started in the summer of 1968 with five

participating schools on the Navajo Indian land. In 1969 five more schools, some Hopi, the others Navajo, joined the program. There are now projects operating on Indian reservations in ten states.

About half the current projects are in major cities, including nearly all of the 25 largest. Most of the rest involve smaller towns and rural areas, taking in migrant camps, Spanish-speaking communities, Indian reservations, and parts of Applachia and the Ozarks.

Teacher Corps projects usually team up with a university school of education, one or more nearby school districts, and the school communities. A federal grant enables the participating parties to work together toward educational reform and innovation for two years. The Washington staff of the Teacher Corps assists each program to attain its objectives and offers help when difficulties arise.

The Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps Program is part of the nationwide effort to produce qualified teachers for areas with high concentrations of low income families, while encouraging colleges and universities to broaden and specificate their teacher preparation programs. The people who designed and constantly redesign the local program expect that it will strengthen educational opportunities for Navajo and Hopi children as well as encourage members of the two tribes to enter the teaching field. The university and Corps staff people also expect that what the Corps learns will be disseminated to other schools of education, other states, other local educational agencies to the noticeable improvement of education in communities scattered over the country.

The Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps program is administered through the College of Education of Northern Arizona University with funds coming from the United States Office of Education under the Bureau of Health, Education, and Welfare. Representatives of the NAU College of Education staff, the two

co-directors of the Teacher Corps Program, officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs agencies and schools, personnel of the public schools involved, and members of the tribal governments all have a part in planning for the two year phases or cycles by which a "class" of interns learns what and how to teach on the Navajo and the Hopi reservations.

This by no means exhausts the list of cooperating groups in a Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps program. By means of Indian interns, parents in the school community get drawn into consulation about curriculum changes, staff changes, and changes in school policy. Other adults get involved in the presentation of native lore - folktales, customs and information - to children in the classroom. Some attend General Educational Development or other adult interest classes. Thus the university, the BIA Agencies, local educational agencies and the local community are involved with one another to their mutual benefit. Not only do the children get better instruction, but feed-back to the School of Education helps toward modification of teacher training and dissemination of new ideas to all the schools of the area.

A most interesting aspect of the Corp's procedure is the planned involvement of the university, local educational agency, and Indian parents in the selection of all team members. A review committee including the above mentioned representatives previews, assesses, and interviews all applicants, all of whom will be spending their next two years in a reservation school if they pass muster.

The Navajo-Hopi program operates on a team basis with each participating school supplying a team leader for the five or six teacher interns assigned to it. These teacher interns are students of at least junior or senior standing with a minimum of 60 semester hours college credit. Each one must evidence a strong interest in and committment to improving educational opportunities for Indian children. Team leaders are experienced teachers

in the local school. They take part in various aspects of the preservice summer sessions with which interns begin their "apprenticeship". The interns during the preservice weeks decide which team leader and school they wish to associate themselves with and they are normally assigned to the school and leader of their choice. Team leaders are normally on the payroll of the local educational agency so that their salaries form part of the local financial support of the Teacher Corps effort.

The average intern, nationwide, is 23 years of age, somewhat more likely to be male than female, and a member of a minority group in almost 50% of the cases. Many already have a bachelor's degree and will receive the Master of Arts on completion of the program. The undergraduates will receive a Bachelor of Science at the successful completion of their two years. Ten percent of the interns are 30 years old or over, and many are married, with an average of 1.4 children. This last group of interns shows the strongest tendancy to droup out of the program because of problems stemming from trying to maintain a family on the limited time and salary the program allows them.

About 5% of those entering the summer preservice schooling drop out, leaving 95% who go on into actual internship. A very high percentage (86%) of those who complete the program have tended to stick with teaching and to work with children in low income areas.

In all, 47 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have had Teacher Corps programs in operation; almost 10,000 interns have been trained, and thousands of students, parents, and teachers have an opportunity to participate in the formulation of school programs. Currently the Corps is serving children in 152 school systems, 37 states, in inner city ghettos, in correctional institutions, in the barrios of the Southwest and the hills of Appalachia. The projection for 1974 indicates that these numbers will

substantially increase.[1]

Applicants accepted by the Northern Arizona University Teacher Corps program, actually now called the Navajo-Hopi Teacher Corps, begin in their program by taking a preservice summer on the campus at Northern Arizona University. The classes include intensive study of the language and culture of the Indian people of the area, as the preservice work is designed to give the corpsmembers the background to manoeuvre and manipulate within the total educational framework of the field situation. Basically, this preservice training will give a picture of the child in his environment -- at home, in the school, and in the community. The seminar type course includes not only language and culture but the community, dealing with problems of cultural differences and child development.

At the end of summer the interns begin their first year's service. During inservice, actual techniques and theory coursework are offered in order that the intern may put into practice the principles of education as soon as he receives them. Instruction for interns in the Local Educational Agency is by video tape (micro teaching) and other audio-visual means, with lessons open for discussion with the team leader. The university, by constant supervision of the classroom internship and community activities, helps direct the intern in his choice of coursework for the interim summer.

In the classroom the five or six interns at a school usually begin by working with individual pupils in tutorial functions. They go on to small group work and eventually deal with the whole class, thus freeing the teacher for other duties. The members of the team rotate every six weeks so that each one gets experience in working with all grade levels. The class-

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[1] P.B.T.C., Vol. 1, No. 8, Multi-State Consortium on Performance-Based Education, (March, 1973).

rooms may range from the traditional self-contained type to variations of the open and portal types. Each Corpsmember, working with the team leader, fellow interns, teachers, and teacher aides, get opportunities to work in the widest range of teaching situations the school provides.

About 60% of the intern's time goes to actual work in the classroom, where he learns teaching techniques as they apply to the Navajo or Hopi child. About 20% of his time goes into efforts to relate to and understand the community and to get community people to interact with the school; the remaining 20 percent goes to University studies.

As the interns begin to see how language and culture cause people in the community to react, they apply the insight to their classroom work and can better apply their knowledge of the general structure of the language when they give remedial work or plan English lessons. By means of this kind of program, with its many levels of feedback, the interns can plan their work and assess the children's achievement realistically. They will not search fruitlessly for mental or physical handicaps when their pupils seem incapable of hearing certain terminal consonants, misuse gender, or create amazing irregularities in the tenses of regular English verbs. They will have heard all this in the adult community from high and low alike. Also the interns know enough of the native language to appreciate the difficulties their pupils face in learning to use the foreign language, English.

Oddly enough, Indian interns usually require course work during the preservice or interim summer to learn some aspects of their own native language, the alphabets of which differ markedly from the English. Most Navajo and Hopi college freshmen can neither read nor write their own language though they learn to do both rapidly and with ease if they speak the language fluently and accurately. They also may need some course work in the structure and grammar of the language as well as in tribal history and political set-up.

The intern has to learn to deal with religious and social taboos or he finds himself in conflict with essential values of his pupils and the community. For example, he must know that clouds have his scientific account of their origin and a deeply held Hopi belief concerning their cause. The Hopi child has been taught all his life that clouds are smoke blown from the pipe of Pipmongwi (tobacco chief). In a gym class or at a social dance, he must know that a boy and girl of the same Navajo name - (clan) cannot dance together because "brother" and "sister" must not touch one another. This clan relationship, having nothing to do with blood kinship, is still one of the firmest bars to marriage in the tribe.

When the first year of internship ends, the interns go back to Northern Arizona University for a second summer's work. By now most know what grade level or subject areas they wish to specialize in so that they can plan their courses and ready themselves for the second school year on the reservation, when they actually do specialize under the team leader's guidance. At the end of the second successful year of internship, the intern receives his bachelor's degree or the master's degree and is ready to accept a teaching position on his own.

By this time the intern has had two years of reservation life. He knows a fair bit about the tribe he has worked with. He has had some real successes in his schoolroom and community experiences. He, whether Indian or non-Indian, should be able to survive the isolation and distance problems of reservation teaching and feel at home among "the people". He will not let the chain link fence which borders the compound isolate him as it has isolated so many teachers who have not had Teacher Corps background.

Although the rationale for surrounding the school and all its facilities with a high metal fence is that the fence keeps out stray cattle, the fence seems to keep teachers in, isolated from the Indian community. Up to the

present, few teachers have tended to venture beyond the gates except to go to town or to the trading post, where they experience no language or cultural barriers. Thus, although the non-Indian teacher could be viewed as a minority within a minority while on the reservation, he seldom experiences the problems of crossing cultural barriers, one of his students' greatest problems.

In the classroom it is no different. The teacher can handle the language barriers for the moment by use of a native-speaking teacher aide or custodian. Don't get me wrong' many teachers in schools on the reservation are concerned, dedicated professional people and many stay a long time, but their effectiveness is limited until they gain a solid acquaintance with and understanding of the culture and "the people" they work among.

The attitude of the teacher is paramount. If there is one single thing we should instill into our prospective reservation teachers besides knowledge of subject matter, teaching methods and techniques, it is a positive attitude toward the children they will be teaching. The Indian child is as bright, as enthusiastic, as naughty, as lovable, as teachable...as human, as much of an individual as any child...anywhere. Cultural differences and language interfere with his easy achievement of goals the teacher sets for him. The same cultural differences (looking in the opposite direction) and language difficulties blind the "untaught teacher" to what is really happening. So student and teacher suffer frustration and failures which impell many to dropout.

Let's go back now and restate just what type of program we want for the new style reservation teacher so that Indian children will benefit by the best education that can be designed and administered for them. First, we have seen that the raw material is available-in young Indian men and women with ability and the desire to become teachers, and inable non-Indians with a sincere interest in teaching Indian children. We still need

some measurement tools to predict their success in performance and probable longevity as teachers on the reservation, but interest and real desire are basics we cannot do without. Secondly, we want a performance based program, one which places emphasis on the results produced in children and the community. This aim brings us back to the mandate Congress gave to the Teacher Corps: "to broaden teacher education and serve the children of low income areas."

The Teacher Corps interprets "broaden teacher education" to mean the development and implementation of an effective alternative to the way teachers have been trained under standard teacher education programs. The Teacher Corps Statement of Mission identifies this alternative kind of teacher education program as competency based teacher education.

Competency based teacher education has a number of distinguishing characteristics. Teacher preparation goals are measured against three criteria: knowledge, performance, and product. Knowledge concerns a person's competence in terms of what he knows; performance, his competence in terms of what he can do; and product, his competence in terms of what the children can do and become as a result of their being taught by him. Typical traditional teacher training programs aim at developing the candidate's knowledge and skills quite explicitly; the child's growth and performance came into the picture only by implication and so are often neglected or imperfectly understood as goals for the trainee.

In competence based programs the minimum level of mastery or competency is established for each objective and the learner has as much time as he needs to complete the objectives successfully. The program planners take seriously the things educators say they believe about how learning occurs. As a result, learning objectives are carefully determined in advance and made clear to the teacher-trainee prior to his instruction. The basic units of competency based teacher education (CBTE) are modules, and each module

sets forth its objectives and a variety of alternative ways a student may use to reach the objectives. The student may, with permission, set up his own way to achieve the objectives in the modules.

Since performance and product criteria are crucial to competency based teacher education, prospective teachers must receive instruction in a setting where each one can work directly with children. This means that "field work" begins early in the student's program and extends over a much longer time than observation and practice teaching does in most traditional programs.

Teacher Corps has established the "module" as a primary means of achieving a competency based program of instruction. Instructional modules vary in many ways: in difficulty, content, time requirements, objectives, etc., but they share a common format. The format is intended to assist the learner to understand the objectives and the alternative ways in which he may proceed through instructional experiences toward the successful completion of the objectives.

In the design of the module system, feedback is a major component. It provides the learner with reinforcement and immediate opportunity for remediation. The feedback mechanism makes the system responsive because it requires interaction between the developer of the module or the instructor using the module and the student himself. The module to some extent forces the learner to make choices and then follow them through; consequently, he tends to seek advice from the teacher. Thus they meet frequently on a one-to-one basis. This contributes to the personalization and individuation of instruction, even the tailoring of some aspects of modules to the learner's individual needs, a great boon in our so often depersonalized schools of higher learning.

Because the competencies expected are spelled out in the form of objectives, problems of accountability are minimized. Both students and

the programs can demonstrate success in visible, assessable ways. Management can be made systematic, efficient, and simple enough to contribute to the quality of the program and to the educational development of each program participant.

Simplification may seem a strange outcome of the use of instructional modules in the light of the seven criteria for each module and the vast number of modules required. Yet simplification of a very important kind does result from the use of properly planned modules. The elements of a module are specific enough that where objectives are not fulfilled the module can be inspected, its parts evaluated, and its point of breakdown rather quickly found and remedied. If a module does work, but not to the teacher's liking, evaluation part by part and then an overall view can help the teacher build in a new element or reorganize those already there to achieve the results desired... Here we find a great point of superority of competency based teacher education over the older styles of teacher education with their vagueness and subjectivity in the area of "product" or changes in the person being taught.

The competency based teacher education approach focuses on what the students are able to do after instruction rather than on performance prior to instruction. Stated in another way, the exit requirements are much more important than the entrance requirements. This means that students who have great potential as teacher but who found standard, campus based program and campus life more than they could handle have a new and better chance than before to become teachers. However, Teacher Corps still requires at least two years of college credit for entrance.

Competency based teacher education offers a number of advantages to native Americans and others of minority groups who wish to learn to teach. First, of course, is the fact that recruitment of minority people is actively

pursued in the name of the Teacher Corps. Then, the interns actually work in schools and with people of their own ethnic and geographical backgrounds. They can work with theory, in the classroom, as soon as they are taught it, and competency based teacher education training gives the trainee a knowledge of his competencies so that he can hold up his head in a certain amount of pride at his accomplishment. Each competency he achieves gives him new, solid ground for new educational experiences so that eventually he finds pleasure in learning and can take ease in his relationships with pupils and his own classmates. This all leads to good expectations of successful completion of internship and a greatly reduced likelihood of teacher turnover on the reservation, in the barrio, and wherever else the "new" teacher may have come from, for he has in effect been there all along.

The minority group recruit, whether American Indian, Chicano, Black, or Applachian, develops direct contacts with the university or teacher education college on which his branch of Teacher Corps is based. He brings with him significant knowledge of the community and his people. Thus the higher educational institutions get input that helps them improve their offerings, both in kind and quality, while the trainee carries out with him the broader concepts and clearer, deeper insights he has gained at the university.

The Teacher Corps has actively taken up the challenge of preparing teachers for work with children of low-income areas and of changing attitudes, methods, and programs of schools of education across the country. Competency based teacher education puts the best tools so far into the hands of the prospective teacher, but it makes very heavy demands on the teacher training institutions. One point of real difficulty is the seemingly simple need to schedule modules of instruction which do not always fit tidily into semesters or weekly hour schemes, especially when students take very different lengths of time

to accomplish the work of a cluster of modules. Colleges of all sorts still find truly individual scheduling and individualized instruction almost agonizingly difficult because of their own built in rigidities.

The Teacher Corps has begun to get some flexibility into schools which have taken up the Corps' challenge. It has begun to get people in the communities to take responsibility for some aspects of the school, its program, and its interaction with the community at large. It has begun to retrain teachers on the job and to put new, competent teachers into areas where only the best can do the job required. It has also been used to accomplish such things as introducing kindergartens into a school district, establishing educational programs for young offenders in a state prison, and preparing curriculum for African studies.

At the university level there has been a break in the academic isolation in which schools of education have operated, and faculties are getting into closer contact with the realities of the classrooms for which they prepare teachers.

Many universities have revised their teacher education curricula so that there is a significant shift away from the traditional lecture-library coursework toward seminars, credit for classroom experience, and work in the community. Most important, these changes are being incorporated into the regular program for student teachers.

Similar advances are being made in the lower schools though not quite to the same degree. The use of teacher aides and volunteers has increased; inservice training of regular staff has increased; new curricula have been introduced and old ones modified; new staffing patterns have been attempted; and bilingual and culturally oriented instruction has been introduced or increased where it already existed.

There have been gains in the interrelation between the schools and their communities as evidenced by increased parent participation in school oriented

meetings for whatever purposes, by formation of parent tutoring groups, by the willingness of parents to volunteer classroom services, and by the lower dropout and absentee rates. Teacher Corps also brings hope to the communities because it has set up a ladder for career oriented minority people and by granting a weekly stipend to interns actually enables students to set foot on some of the rungs for upward mobility.

Teacher Corps has done much, especially in establishing CBTE; it can and will do more to improve education in low-income areas and to change for the better the schools of teacher mobility.

With the proper professional preparation of Indian people, they should eventually be controlling their own educational destiny and have full self-determination.